

distillation a top product, a resorcinol-rich fraction comprising resorcinol and hydroquinone,

- (iii) subjecting the distillation bottom product obtained from (ii) to a distillation stage (III) designed to produce, as a distillation top product, a hydroquinone-rich fraction comprising hydroquinone and resorcinol,

and then subjecting the hydroquinone-rich fraction and/or the resorcinol-rich fraction to a refining stage (IV or V) in order to extract the hydroquinone and/or the resorcinol respectively.

2. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein stage (I), when it is present, or stage (II) is preceded by at least one preliminary detarring stage (1, 1') designed to produce, as a bottom product, a tar-rich fraction and, as a top product, a detarred fraction which is used to feed stage (I) or stage (II).

3. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 2, wherein two predistillation stages (1, 1') are provided, the tar-rich bottom fraction from the first (1) being used to feed the second (1') and the two detarred top fractions being used to feed stage (I) or (II).

4. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein stage (II) is designed to result in a resorcinol-rich fraction comprising:

- from 75 to 95% resorcinol, and
- from 5 to 25% hydroquinone.

5. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein stage (III) is designed to result in a hydroquinone-rich fraction comprising:

- from 75 to 98% hydroquinone, and
- from 2 to 25% resorcinol.

6. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the refining of the rich fractions is carried out on drainers.

7. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the distillation column (I) has the following specifications:

- number of theoretical stages: from 5 to 40; and
- reflux ratio R of between 1 and 10.

8. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the distillation column (II) has the following specifications:

- number of theoretical stages: from 10 to 85; and
- reflux ratio R of between 1 and 35.

9. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the distillation column (III) is a scraped falling film device or a distillation column having the following specifications:

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- number of theoretical stages: from 1 to 10, and
- reflux ratio R of between 0.5 and 5.

10. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the detarring column or columns (1, 1') is/are scraped falling film devices.

11. (Amended) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the crude mixture comprises, with respect to the total mixture:

- from 20 to 60% by weight of hydroquinone,
 - from 2 to 20% by weight of resorcinol,
 - from 0 to 20% by weight of catechol, and
 - the remainder being formed of various compounds comprising tars.
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13. (Amended) The plant as claimed in claim 12, which additionally comprises:

- a detarring column (1) designed to produce, at the column top, a detarred fraction and, at the bottom of the column, a tar-rich fraction
- optionally at least one other distillation column (11) fed with the tar-rich fraction originating from the preceding column (1) and designed to produce, at the column top, a detarred fraction and, at the bottom, a tar-rich fraction,

the top fraction or fractions of these columns being used to feed column (I) or (II).

14. (Amended) The plant as claimed in claim 12, wherein the column (II) is designed to result in a resorcinol-rich fraction comprising:

- from 75 to 95% resorcinol, and
- from 5 to 25% hydroquinone.

15. (Amended) The plant as claimed in claim 12, wherein the column (III) is designed to result in a hydroquinone-rich fraction comprising:

- from 75 to 98% hydroquinone, and
- from 2 to 25% resorcinol.

16. (Amended) The plant as claimed in claim 12, wherein the refining device or devices are drainers.

17. (Amended) The plant as claimed in claim 12, wherein the distillation column (I) has the following specifications:

- number of theoretical stages: from 5 to 40; and
- reflux ratio R of between 1 and 10.

18. (Amended) The plant as claimed in claim 12, wherein the distillation column (II) has the following specifications:

- Q2
- number of theoretical stages: from 10 to 85[, preferably from 15 to 40; and
- reflux ratio R of between 1 and 35.

19. (Amended) The plant as claimed in claim 12, wherein the distillation column (III) is a scraped falling film device or a distillation column having the following specifications:

- number of theoretical stages: from 1 to 10, and
- reflux ratio R of between 0.5 and 5.

20. (Amended) The plant as claimed in claim 12, wherein the detarring column or columns (1, 1') is/are scraped falling film devices.

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing amendments are respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner have any questions concerning the subject application, a telephone call to the undersigned would be appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

BURNS, DOANE, SWECKER & MATHIS, L.L.P.

By: 

Teresa Stanek Rea
Registration No. 30,427

P.O. Box 1404
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1404
(703) 836-6620

Date: July 25, 2001